

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2018

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2017 State of Preschool Report Highlights National Progress ***Montana targets federal dollars for public pre-K, launches pilot program***

New Brunswick, NJ—While most states enrolled more young children in public preschool, Montana remains one of seven states opting not to fund early education programs, according to *The State of Preschool 2017* report issued today by the National Institute of Early Education Research.

The State of Preschool 2017 annual report is the only national report on state-funded preschool programs. This year's report, based on 2016-17 academic year data, includes a special section on policies affecting Dual Language Learners, and highlights changes since 2002, when NIEER began tracking state pre-K.

Montana did provide full-day, high-quality preschool for a few hundred 4-year-olds using federal Preschool Development Grant funding. Nationwide, 18 states relied on PDG funding to enhance or expand preschool programs. And policymakers recently allocated \$6 million in state funding over two years for a pilot preschool program serving 300 children.

"Recent changes in federal policy--including ESSA--make it clear that progress in early education depends more than ever on the states," said NIEER Senior Co-Director Steven Barnett. "Our report highlights which states invest best in their young children and which leave too many children behind. Montana has been slow to invest in pre-K but a pilot program perhaps signals a change."

Research shows early childhood education can help prepare all children for greater success in elementary school and beyond – but only if quality is high. Enrollment in state-funded preschool programs has more than doubled since 2002—with more than 1.5 million children now enrolled nationwide. National highlights include:

- 43 states, D.C. and Guam provide publicly funded preschool to more than 1.5 million children
- 7 states do not invest in preschool programs
- 10 states enroll 50% or more of their 4-year-olds in public pre-K
- States spent a total of \$7.6 billion on pre-K in 2016-17, a 2% increase from the previous year (inflation-adjusted) while real state spending-per-child enrolled in pre-K decreased
- AL, MI, RI are the only states meeting all 10 new quality standards benchmarks
- Most states don't know how many dual language learners are enrolled in pre-K and most do not require pre-K teachers to have *any training* specific to working with DLLs

"Most developed nations now offer universal preschool-- even China has committed to pre-K for every 4-year-old by 2020," Dr. Barnett noted. "Meanwhile, the United States has made little progress... This is no way to compete globally now--or in the future. Our first step back to leadership is quality preschool."

The State of Preschool 2017 yearbook was supported with funding provided by the Heising-Simons Foundation. Data used in the report come from a general survey funded by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The supplemental survey of state policies related to dual language learners and report was supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates

Foundation. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions in this report are solely those of the authors. For more information and detailed state-by-state profiles on quality access, and funding, please visit www.nieer.org.

The National Institute for Early Education Research (www.nieer.org) at the Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, supports early childhood education policy and practice through independent, objective research. For more information, contact: Michelle Ruess mruess@nieer.org 848-932-4350